

Focus. . . Marriages Decline in Missouri

Marriage rates in Missouri have continued to decline since 1990. In 1998, the marriage rate fell to its lowest since 1960, 8.0 marriages per 1,000 population. In general, Missouri marriage rates followed the same pattern as the nation's: low in 1960's; relatively high in 1970's and early 1980's; declining in 1990's. However, Missouri rates fluctuated more dramatically than those of the United States. Figure 1 shows three stages of change in the past 39 years. Between 1960 and 1966, Missouri marriage rates were lower than those of the nation's; starting from 1968 its increase surpassed the national pace; then from 1990 on the Missouri marriage rate decreased faster, dropping below the nation's rate again.

Over the past 39 years, Missouri population increased 26 percent, while marriage numbers increased 24 percent. Table 1 indicates the Missouri marriage trend in those years by looking at percent change in age-specific marriage rates. There was an increase in all ages for both marrying men and women from 1960 to 1970 except the under 20 age group of brides. For grooms, the 35 to 44 age group had the biggest increase, 26.8 percent, then followed by under 20 age group, 25.1 percent. For brides, the 25 to 34 year old group gained the most (35.6 percent), group 20 to 24 the second most (22.3 percent). The only group that experienced a slight decline (5.3 percent) at that period of time was the under 20 age group of brides.

The trend reversed in half of the age groups after 1970. In the next 20 years (1970 to 1990), two ends of the age spectrum experienced a decrease for both grooms and brides, but the middle age groups showed an increase. From 1970 to 1990, both grooms and brides in age groups under 20, and 20 to 24 had a much sharper decline than 65 and over age group. For both genders, the age group 35 to 44 had the biggest increase, followed by 45 to 64 age group for male, 25 to 34 for female.

The picture is different from 1990 to 1998 with an accelerated decrease in most age groups. For marrying men, young and old, age specific marriage rates continued to decline, with under 20 year old the sharpest (46.2 percent). For marrying women, the most obvious decrease in the percent change happened in under 20 age group (42.3 percent), followed by 20 to 24, then by 65 and over age group. The two age groups that had increased marriage rates of brides were 45 to 64 and 25 to 34.

According to Table 2, the age adjusted marriage rates in 1998 were the lowest for brides since 1960 (18.4 marriages per 1,000), the second lowest for grooms (18.4). This rate showed a decrease of 3 marriages per 1,000 people for brides, 3.4 marriages for grooms from 1960 to 1998. However, the change in the past 39 years varied across the age spectrum. The trend is that the younger and older age groups experienced varying degrees of decrease in marriage rates but middle age groups showed increases. The characteristics of those getting married have changed in several respects. Those persons marrying in 1998 tended to be older, better educated and more likely to be remarrying than their counterparts in 1960.

The most dramatic change was the decrease of youthful marriages. The percentage of all brides and grooms under 20 years of age dropped from 25.4 percent in 1960 to 7.8 percent in 1998. In 1960 under 20 marriages consisted of 38 percent of the total marriages for brides, 12.7 percent for grooms, while in 1998 the same age group accounted for only 10.9 percent for brides, 4.5 percent for grooms. The sharp decline in teen marriages was reflected more clearly by age-specific rates. Table 2 indicates that the age-specific marriage rate of marrying women for the less than 20 age group decreased 72.2 percent from 85.5 marriages per 1,000 population in 1960 to 23.8 in 1998; for marrying men the rates dropped 67.0 percent from 28.6 marriages per 1,000 population in 1960 to 9.5 in 1998. For brides, the next big drop happened in 65 and over age group, while for grooms that occurred in 20 to 24 age group.

Increases in age-specific marriage rates occurred in the same age groups for men and women but with different scales. For brides, age group 25 to 34 had the biggest jump, 120.2 percent from 1960 to 1998, then followed by age group 35 to 44. For grooms, the biggest increase happened in age group 35 to 44, with an increase of 61.9 percent during the same time period.

Overall the median ages for both brides and grooms increased over the past 39 years. The median age for the first-time grooms increased from 21.4 years of age in 1960 to 25 in 1998, with a difference of 3.6 years. The median age for the first-time brides was 18.0 in 1960. It reached 23.0 years of age in 1998, reflecting an increase of 5 years. The same change happened in those getting remarried after divorce. The median age for remarrying husbands became 39 in 1998 with a 5 year increase since 1960; for remarrying wives the increase was 5.8 years (30.2 in 1960, 36 in 1998).

Another notable change occurred in the educational level of brides and grooms. The percentage of couples who had one or more years of college education increased from 20.4 percent in 1975 (first available data) to 33.1 percent in 1998. The difference is much bigger when looking at the marrying men and women separately. In 1998, 44.4 percent of grooms had some college education, 48.8 percent of brides had the same level of education.

Changes also occurred in the distribution of marriage by previous marital status. The percent of first time marriages declined as did that for widows and widowers remarrying. According to Table 3 the percent of brides who were never married declined from 72.5 in 1960 to 59.2 percent in 1998. First time grooms declined from 72.8 to 60.0 percent. The percent of grooms who were previously widowed decreased from 6.1 percent in 1960 to 3.3 percent in 1998. Brides also showed a decrease in widowed status from 7.0 percent to 3.6 percent. But an increase occurred for those who were previously divorced. Grooms who previously divorced jumped from 21.1 percent in 1960 to 36.6 percent in 1998, for those brides it changed from 20.5 to 37.2 percent.

The marriage rate has continued to decline in Missouri as in the United States. There are several possible reasons for the downward trend, including: 1. Young men and women are delaying their marriage to pursue an education or career goal first. 2. Increasing numbers of people are staying single. 3. Many people are choosing to live together before marriage or in place of marriage. 4. Many may have experienced a bad marriage when their parents divorced, and they are leery of trying it themselves.

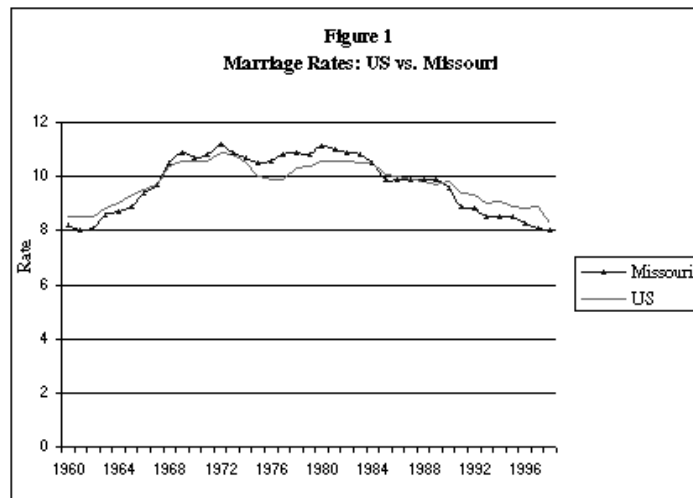


Table 1

Percent Change in Age-Specific Marriage Rates: Missouri 1960-1998

<i>Groom</i>	<i>Under 20</i>	<i>20 to 24</i>	<i>25 to 34</i>	<i>35 to 44</i>	<i>45 to 64</i>	<i>65+</i>	<i>rate</i>
1960 vs 1970	25.1%	15.6%	21.4%	26.8%	19.7%	1.0%	19.1%
1970 vs 1980	-16.0%	-32.3%	10.0%	34.9%	10.6%	-2.0%	-10.9%
1980 vs 1990	-41.6%	-19.6%	2.0%	2.4%	8.9%	-18.9%	-10.4%
1990 vs 1998	-46.2%	-19.4%	-0.4%	-7.6%	-0.6%	-13.3%	-11.1%
1960 vs 1998	-67.0%	-49.3%	35.6%	61.9%	43.3%	-30.3%	-15.5%
<i>Bride</i>							
1960 vs 1970	-5.3%	22.3%	35.6%	14.8%	13.1%	1.8%	12.6%
1970 vs 1980	-20.2%	-20.2%	38.9%	37.4%	0.7%	3.6%	-5.6%
1980 vs 1990	-36.2%	-4.6%	13.8%	17.0%	5.7%	-24.9%	-5.8%
1990 vs 1998	-42.3%	-14.9%	2.7%	-4.8%	7.9%	-7.8%	-12.4%
1960 vs 1998	-72.2%	-20.7%	120.2%	75.5%	30.0%	-27.0%	-12.3%

Table 2

Age-Specific Marriage Rates per 1,000 Population by Groom and Brides: Missouri 1960-1998

<i>Groom</i>	<i>Under 20</i>	<i>20 to 24</i>	<i>25 to 34</i>	<i>35 to 44</i>	<i>45 to 64</i>	<i>65+</i>	<i>Total Age-Adjusted Rate*</i>
1960	28.6	116.4	34.5	11.6	6.6	4.7	21.8
1970	35.8	134.5	41.8	14.7	8.0	4.8	25.9
1980	30.1	91.1	46.0	19.9	8.8	4.7	23.1

1990	17.6	73.3	46.9	20.4	9.6	3.8	20.7
1991	16.1	68.0	44.1	19.4	8.9	3.5	19.3
1992	14.1	66.6	44.2	19.4	9.0	3.6	19.1
1993	13.3	66.4	42.9	18.5	9.0	3.3	18.6
1994	12.6	67.0	44.2	19.1	9.1	3.2	18.9
1995	11.2	65.2	45.7	18.9	9.3	3.3	18.9
1996	10.2	62.4	45.3	19.5	9.6	3.3	18.6
1997	9.8	60.3	45.6	18.9	9.5	3.2	18.3
1998	9.5	59.1	46.7	18.8	9.5	3.3	18.4
<i>Percent change</i>							
1960 vs 1998	-67.0%	-49.3%	35.6%	61.9%	43.3%	-30.3%	-15.5%
<i>Bride</i>							
1960	85.5	86.0	18.2	9.4	5.2	1.8	21.0
1970	80.9	105.2	24.7	10.8	5.9	1.8	23.6
1980	64.6	84.0	34.3	14.8	5.9	1.9	22.3
1990	41.2	80.1	39.0	17.3	6.2	1.4	21.0
1991	37.4	74.7	37.2	16.6	5.8	1.4	19.7
1992	34.8	74.1	37.6	16.6	6.0	1.3	19.5
1993	32.7	73.2	36.9	16.0	6.0	1.3	19.0
1994	32.1	73.9	38.0	16.4	6.2	1.3	19.3
1995	28.9	74.1	39.2	16.5	6.4	1.3	19.2
1996	26.6	72.3	39.2	16.8	6.8	1.3	19.0
1997	24.5	71.0	39.7	16.4	6.7	1.2	18.7
1998	23.8	68.2	40.1	16.5	6.7	1.3	18.4
<i>Percent change</i>							
1960 vs 1998	-72.2%	-20.7%	120.2%	75.5%	30.0%	-27.0%	-12.3%
* Age adjusted marriage rates are adjusted to 1940 US population.							

Table 3

Percent Distribution of Previous Marital Status of Grooms and Brides:

Missouri 1960 - 1998

Groom

Bride

	<i>Single</i>	<i>Widowed</i>	<i>Divorced</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>Widowed</i>	<i>Divorced</i>
1960	72.8%	6.1%	21.1%	72.5%	7.0%	20.5%
1970	72.3%	4.6%	23.1%	73.3%	5.4%	21.4%
1980	63.5%	3.7%	32.9%	65.0%	4.3%	30.7%
1990	60.5%	3.3%	36.2%	60.1%	3.5%	36.4%
1998	60.0%	3.3%	36.6%	59.2%	3.6%	37.2%

Provisional Vital Statistics for June 1999

Live births increased in June as 6,705 Missouri babies were born compared with 6,086 in June 1998. Cumulative births for the 6- and 12-month periods ending with June also show increases. For the first half of the year, births increased by 1.7 percent from 36,765 to 37,386.

Deaths were virtually the same for June of 1999 compared with the previous June. However, deaths increased for the 6- and 12-month periods ending with June.

The **Natural increase** in Missouri in June was 2,288 (6,705 births minus 4,417 deaths). This compares with 1,664 one year earlier.

Marriages increased sharply in June as 7,024 Missouri couples married compared with 5,289 in June 1998. Most of this increase is probably due to irregular reporting as cumulative marriages are down for the 6- and 12-month periods ending with June.

Dissolutions of marriage decreased for all three periods shown in the table below.

Infant deaths decreased in June as 49 Missouri infants died compared with 59 one year earlier. For the 12 months ending with June the infant death rate was 7.5, the same as the previous year.

PROVISIONAL RESIDENT VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE STATE OF MISSOURI

<u>Item</u>	June				Jan. June cumulative				12 months ending with June				
	<u>Number</u>		<u>Rate*</u>		<u>Number</u>		<u>Rate*</u>		<u>Number</u>		<u>Rate*</u>		
	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1998</u>	<u>1999</u>
Live Births	6,086	6,705	13.6	14.9	36,765	37,386	13.6	13.7	74,662	76,273	13.5	13.8	14.0
Deaths	4,422	4,417	9.9	9.8	27,174	28,589	10.1	10.5	53,283	54,794	10.1	9.8	10.0
Natural increase	1,664	2,288	3.7	5.1	9,591	8,797	3.6	3.2	21,379	21,479	3.4	3.9	3.9
Marriages	5,289	7,024	11.8	15.6	20,870	20,538	7.7	7.6	43,631	43,443	8.3	8.0	8.0
Dissolutions	2,391	1,957	5.3	4.3	12,675	12,077	4.7	4.4	25,629	24,707	4.7	4.7	4.5
Infant deaths	59	49	9.7	7.3	313	287	8.5	7.7	562	571	8.4	7.5	7.5
Population base (in thousands)	...	...	5,439	5,470	...	...	5,439	5,470	...	...	5,386	5,423	5,454

*Rates for live births, deaths, natural increase, marriages and dissolutions are computed on the number per 1,000 estimated population. The infant death rate is based on the number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births. Rates are adjusted to account for varying lengths of monthly reporting periods.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER Services provided on a nondiscriminatory basis.

Alternate forms of this publication for persons with disabilities may be obtained by contacting the Missouri Department of Health, Center for Health Information Management & Epidemiology/Bureau of Health Data Analysis, P.O. Box 570, Jefferson City, MO 65102; phone (573) 751-6278. Hearing impaired citizens telephone 1-800-735-2966.